

Grade Six – World History and Geography: Ancient Civilizations

Global Overview: Early Beginnings to 300 CE

Students in sixth-grade world history and geography classrooms learn about the lives of the earliest humans, the development of tools, the gathering way of life, agriculture, and the emergence of civilizations in Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus River valley, China, and the Mediterranean basin. With the guidance of their teachers, students review the geography of the ancient and contemporary worlds and recognize that these civilizations were not static societies but continually experienced change. In addition to developing basic geography skills, students are introduced to patterns, systems, and processes of physical and human geography. The fundamental aspects of this period that students will study in this course include:

- The movement of early humans across continents, the political, social, and economic reasons for the migrations, and the migrants' adaptations to the geography and climate of new regions.
- The rise of diverse civilizations, characterized by ~~economies of surplus, centralized states, social hierarchies, cities, networks of trade,~~ art and architecture, ~~and~~ systems of writing, ~~and the economics of surplus, centralized states, social hierarchies, cities, and networks of trade.~~
- The growth of urban societies as well as links with one another through trade, diplomacy, migration, conquest, and the diffusion of goods and ideas.

- The expansion of trade and the accompanying diffusion of goods and services, ideas, and cultures and the contribution of trade to the growth of empires.
- The development of new political institutions (monarchy, empire, democracy) and new ideas (citizenship, freedom, morality, law).
- The birth and spread of religious and philosophical systems (Judaism, Greek thought, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity), and changes in societies (social class divisions, slavery, divisions of labor between men and women).

In studying this earliest history of humankind, students will have the opportunity to explore different kinds of source documents, such as the Hebrew Bible, Mesopotamian laws, the Homeric epics, Greek drama, the Bhagavad Gita, the Analects of Confucianism, the New Testament, and a range of visual images.

Beginnings to 4000 BCE

Our early human ancestors first started making rudimentary stone tools perhaps 2.4 million years ago. Genetically modern humans, or *Homo sapiens*, began to experiment with farming and settled ways of life about 10,000 years ago. That stretch of time, from the first stone tools to farming, makes up about 99.5 percent of the human past. During that long era, technological and other cultural changes took place very slowly, often in response to regional or global changes in the physical and natural environment. All humans and their ancestors lived exclusively by gathering and hunting, and global population rose very

slowly. *Homo sapiens* gradually developed an increasingly sophisticated tool kit, acquired the gift of language, and migrated farther than any human ancestors. In fact, the peopling of the earth is the first big story in global history.

The slow pace of change throughout so much of the human past raises interesting questions about the past 10,000 years, that is, our “recent” history. If humans had lived exclusively as gatherers and hunters and still managed to adapt successfully to many climates and climatic changes over hundreds of thousands of years, why did these radical changes begin to occur? Why did some humans start to work very hard planting and harvesting crops, living in crowded villages, building cities, accepting the rule of monarchs, and paying taxes? Placing the development of early civilizations in this long-term historical perspective encourages teachers and students to inquire why the pace of historical change in certain parts of the world began to speed up.

Sometime between 80,000 and 60,000 years ago humans began to migrate out of Africa to the Middle East, then to the rest of Asia, Europe and finally the Americas. The reasons for these migrations can be described as “push” and “pull” factors (negative and positive reasons for leaving). In these earliest times humans engaged in cost-benefit analysis: they migrated if the benefits of migrating exceeded the opportunity cost.

4000-1000 BCE: Kingdoms and Innovations

These 3,000 years were bounded at one end by the rise of the earliest complex urban societies and at the other by the start of an era of accelerating

69 interaction among societies. During those three millennia, numerous technical
70 and intellectual innovations took place, especially in the dense agricultural
71 societies that arose in the Middle East (notably Mesopotamia, Syria, the Levant,
72 Anatolia, and Persia), the Nile Valley of Africa, northern India, China, and the
73 lands around the Aegean Sea. By about 2000 BCE, urban societies also began
74 to emerge in the Americas, starting with the Olmec civilization in Mesoamerica
75 and Chavín in South America.

76 Global population rose at a faster rate than ever before, and in some places
77 cities multiplied. Both urban-dwellers and rural people came to form governments
78 and monarchies headed by kings or, very occasionally, queens, often claiming
79 authority from gods and passing on power to their own descendants. These
80 monarchs imposed taxes on ordinary people to pay for bureaucracies, armies,
81 irrigation works, and monumental architecture. Writing systems were first
82 invented to serve governments and merchants and later became means of
83 transmission of religious, scientific, and literary ideas. Many inventions and ideas
84 fundamental to modern life appeared, including the wheel, the plow, metallurgy,
85 codes of law, mathematics, and astronomy. Some of the religions of that era set
86 the stage for later world belief systems.

87 Important population movements included slow migrations of farming peoples
88 in tropical Africa and Southeast Asia, North and South America, and the
89 temperate woodlands of Europe. In the steppes of Central Asia, a new type of
90 society emerged after 4000 BCE. There, communities began to organize a way
91 of life based on herding domesticated animals such as sheep, cattle, or horses.

This economy, called pastoral nomadism, permitted humans to adapt in larger numbers to climates where farming was limited. Pastoral nomads lived mainly on the products of their livestock. They grazed herds over vast areas and came regularly in contact with urban societies, often to trade, sometimes to make war.

1000 BCE-300 CE: An Age of Empires and Interchange

During these 1,300 years, many patterns of change established in the previous era continued, but at a faster pace. The number of cities multiplied, and states appeared in new forms that were bigger, more complex, and more efficient at coercing people and extracting taxes from them. Among the largest states of that era were the Assyrian and Babylonian empires centered in Mesopotamia, the Achaemenid and Parthian empires in Persia, the Kushan empire in Central Asia, the Maurya empire in India, and the kingdom of Kush in the upper Nile River valley. The largest of all were the Roman Empire, which came to engulf the entire Mediterranean Sea region and much of Europe, and the Han Empire far to the east in China. At the dawn of the first millennium CE, these two states together ruled a small part of the earth's land area but roughly one-half of all the people on earth.

A second key development of that era was the establishment of a thicker web of interregional communication and transport, which allowed goods, technologies, and ideas to move long distances. **Entrepreneurship developed during the rule of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon and Cyrus in Persia, leading to significant improvements in significant improvement in people's standard of**

115 **living.** Interlocking networks of roads, trails, and sea lanes connected empires,
116 kingdoms, and regions of the Eastern Hemisphere with one another. Merchants
117 and other travelers created similar interconnections in Mesoamerica and along
118 South America's Andean mountain spine. The Indian Ocean basin emerged as
119 an active channel of exchange among the peoples who lived around its shores.
120 Caravan merchants pioneered long-distance trade linkages that spanned
121 relatively lightly populated regions, such as the Central Asia steppes and the
122 Sahara Desert, thereby connecting farming and urban societies that lay along the
123 rims of these expanses. Among the ideas transmitted both along those routes
124 and within empires were belief systems. During this period, the use of credit led
125 to the expansion of trade and empires.

126 **Early Humankind and the Development of Human Societies**

127 This unit aims to advance student understanding of the broad sweep of
128 history from the beginning of tool making to the appearance of farming. Our
129 knowledge of this long era depends on evidence from material remains,
130 especially from bones and stone tools, and, more recently, on research in human
131 DNA and long-term climatic and geological change.

132 For millions of years, the genetic ancestors of humans, known as hominins
133 (or hominids), used stone tools and lived on foods found by gathering and
134 hunting. Archeological evidence shows students that our earliest forebears
135 evolved in eastern Africa and that small bands of those ancestors migrated into
136 Eurasia about 1.9 million years ago. Perhaps around 800,000 years ago, early

humans discovered how to control fire, allowing them to cook food, keep away predators, and burn areas of land in order to flush out game.

Homo sapiens, that is, anatomically modern humans, almost certainly evolved in Africa, appearing 200,000 or more years ago. Modern humans adapted well to new environments, developing increasingly diverse stone and bone tools for collecting and processing food. Probably some time after 100,000 years ago, our species developed the capacity for language. Teachers can incorporate art and literature by having students create cave paintings and write legends based on these images. Students may consider evidence of early humans making beads, carving patterns in bones, and painting symbols or figures on cave walls, which all indicate that people may also have been able to communicate through language. Once this happened, technological change began to accelerate. People could more readily teach one another complex skills, such as how to make tools or shelters. Language made complex social cooperation easier. They could pass down ideas from one generation to the next. They could also talk about their world, the past, the future, and the cosmos. Religious beliefs may well have developed along with language.

Students may trace the routes by which *Homo sapiens* peopled the world. The earliest bands probably first ventured beyond Africa 90,000 to 100,000 years ago. Humans may have reached Australia 60,000 or more years ago and Europe 40,000 years ago. In the Middle East and Europe, humans almost certainly encountered Neanderthals, a related hominin species. Humans had language and more advanced technical skills than Neanderthals, a species that became

extinct about 28,000 years ago. Early humans reached the Americas from Eurasia at least 12,000 years ago, possibly earlier. Teachers may ask students to consider how human bands advanced southward along the western coasts of North and South America as far as Chile. Perhaps people traveled part of the time in boats. Clearly, human migrants adjusted successfully to many different climatic environments. They continually came up with new ideas for living in unfamiliar climates. For example, they learned to stitch animal skins together to make warm clothing, fashion stone tools with finer cutting blades, and build stouter huts.

Students investigate the dramatic changes that took place when some humans began to settle in one place year round. Archaeological evidence indicates that in the Middle East, and probably Egypt, foraging bands settled near stands of edible grasses, the genetic ancestors of wheat and other grains. Men and women began deliberately to sow plants that had favorable qualities, for example, varieties that were large, tasty, and easy to cook. In this way, they gradually domesticated those plants. Domesticated plants and animals became increasingly important to human diets regionally and turned people into farmers, that is, *producers* of food rather than simply *collectors* of it. They could therefore live in larger settlements and accumulate more material goods than when they foraged for a living. Teachers may emphasize that agriculture involved not only the act of farming but also a new way of life based on food production. On a global scale, however, hunting and gathering remained for many an important way of making a living for thousands of years.

Students may identify the several different parts of the world where agricultural societies appear to have emerged independently of one another between about 12,000 and 5,000 years ago. Early farmers gradually developed more varied stone tools, for example, sickles to cut grain and grinding stones to make flour. They used fire to transform clay into durable pottery. They wove wool, cotton, and linen into textiles. Because the early millennia of agriculture involved more sophisticated stone tools, it is known as the Neolithic, or New Stone Age.

The Early Civilization of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Kush

Between 10,000 and 4,000 BCE, farming spread widely across Africa and Eurasia. Startling changes began to take place in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates (Fertile Crescent) and Nile Rivers. In this unit, students learn that people who lived near the banks of those rivers began to use irrigation techniques to control water and extend farming, despite an extremely arid climate. A similar process got under way in the Indus River valley in India and in the Huang He (Yellow) River valley in northern China some centuries later. When communities began to intensify farming with new techniques, they were able to produce surplus food. Students may query the possible relationship between surpluses and rapid population growth and the rise of more complex social, economic, and political systems in those valleys.

The civilizations of Mesopotamia (today Iraq), in the valley of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, and Egypt, along the Nile River, both arose in the fourth

millennium BCE. Kush, a civilization in the upper Nile River region south of Egypt emerged in the second millennium BCE. All these societies depended on their river locations to build dense agricultural societies. Nevertheless, they took somewhat different courses. Students analyze the geographic factors, such as climate, topography, and flood patterns, which influenced the organization, economies, and belief systems that those civilizations developed. Map resources can be used to show students the geographic features that affected the development of the Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Kushan civilizations.

In the third millennium BCE, Mesopotamia was divided most of the time into a number of kingdoms. Beginning in Sumer, the region of southern Mesopotamia, those early kingdoms were dominated by large walled cities, each enclosing a royal palace and a temple dedicated to the local god, along with densely packed housing for the population. By around 3,000 BCE, a second cluster of cities arose in what is today Syria and in northern Mesopotamia. In both areas, the rulers claimed to possess authority divinely bestowed by their city's god or goddess. The monarchs' wives sometimes controlled their own estates. The city-states of Mesopotamia frequently fought one another over resources, but they also formed alliances. Students may analyze why people in this region built cities with walls around them.

Trade was extensive, not only among the Mesopotamian kingdoms, but also between Mesopotamia and surrounding regions. The land had rich soil that produced abundant crops, but it had no minerals. So, for example, a red stone called carnelian was imported from the Indus Valley, a blue stone called lapis

lazuli was imported from what is now Afghanistan, and silver was imported from Anatolia (modern Turkey). In some periods, trade and diplomatic exchanges took place between Mesopotamia and Egypt.

At the end of the third millennium, Sargon of Akkad (2270-2215 BCE) managed briefly to forge a unified empire. Sargon placed his daughter in the powerful position of high priestess of the moon god, starting a tradition that continued in the reigns of subsequent kings.

Teachers introduce students to Mesopotamia's numerous technological and social innovations, including the wheel, the wooden plow, the seed drill, and improved bronze metallurgy, as well as advances in mathematics, astronomical measurement, and law. Teachers introduce students to the Mesopotamians' complex legal system and written laws, of which Hammurabi's are the best preserved, though not the earliest. Teachers can engage students in a role play activity to examine how law in an ancient society managed disputes. Essential for the functioning of the legal system and of the administrative structure of Mesopotamian kingdoms was the cuneiform writing system, which was written on clay tablets and could be used to phonetically represent many ancient languages, including Sumerian and Akkadian, the languages of Mesopotamia. Students analyze why the Mesopotamians invented and used a writing system.

Students consider why Egypt, in contrast to Mesopotamia, was usually united under a single king during the period from 3000 to 1500. Egyptian kings claimed not only to have divine approval but to be deities themselves. Indeed, the Egyptians built immense tomb pyramids and numerous temples. The Egyptians

prized order (*ma'at*) in all aspects of life, including social rules and even careful preparations for the afterlife. Students may analyze the Egyptian writing system in comparison with Mesopotamian cuneiform. Both represented the sounds of their languages, but the Egyptians used papyrus and stone as writing surfaces rather than clay tablets. Students may also take account of the daily lives of farmers, artisans, and families as reflected in surviving tomb and temple art.

Around 1500 BCE, Egypt entered the era known as the New Kingdom. Kings such as Thutmose III expanded the Egyptian empire far up the Nile River into what is now Sudan, and into the Levant, that is, the coastal region at the eastern end of the Mediterranean. Teachers may exemplify this period by highlighting Queen Hatshepsut (ca. 1479-1458 BCE) and King Ramses II, also known as Ramses the Great (1279-1212 BCE). During Hatshepsut's reign, as throughout the whole New Kingdom, Egyptian art and architecture flourished, and trade with distant lands brought enormous wealth into Egypt. Ramses II's long reign was a time of great prosperity. He fought battles to maintain the Egyptian Empire and built innumerable temples and monuments throughout Egypt.

Egypt held long trade connections in Eurasia and Africa. Representatives of the king sailed up the Nile to Kush and penetrated the Red Sea coasts to obtain incense, ivory, and ebony wood. To the northeast, they acquired timber from the forests of Lebanon. New Kingdom pharaohs also nurtured ties through treaties and marriage with Middle Eastern states, notably Babylonia (in Mesopotamia), Mittani (in Syria), and the kingdom of the Hittites in Anatolia. Diplomatic envoys and luxury goods circulated among these royal courts, so that they formed the

world's first international community of states.

The African civilization of Kush lay in the upper Nile Valley, where rainfall was higher and where farm and cattle land stretched far beyond the banks of the river. Students may construct a chronological table of Kush's complex relations with Egypt. In some periods, Egyptian pharaohs dominated Kush, taxing the population and extracting goods, particularly gold. After the New Kingdom faded, Kush reasserted its independence, though maintaining close contacts with Egypt. Merchants of Kush also traded with the Arabian Peninsula, India, and equatorial Africa. Teachers may introduce comparisons between the societies of Kush and Egypt, for example pictorial representations of the two architectural traditions. For example, kings of Kush built pyramids, although they were smaller than Egypt's structures. In the first millennium BCE, however, Kush developed a distinctive cultural style that included painted pottery, the elephant as an artistic motif, an alphabetic writing system, and a flourishing iron industry. In the eighth century BCE, Kush's ruler took advantage of political weakness in Egypt to conquer it, uniting a huge stretch of the Nile Valley under the twenty-fifth dynasty for nearly a century. The Kush state did not seriously decline until the fourth century CE.

The Ancient Israelites (Hebrews)

The ancient Israelites, also known as the Hebrew people, emerged in the eastern Mediterranean coastal region about the twelfth century BCE. This was a period of turmoil that marked the end of Egypt's New Kingdom **empire** and that scholars associate with destructive invasions by groups known as "Sea People."

The Israelites organized the kingdom of Israel east of the Mediterranean shore by the eleventh century BCE. Founding a capital in the city of Jerusalem, they terraced the hillsides in their land and built up an agricultural economy. Their religion became known as Judaism. In studying the early Jewish faith, students learn the distinction between religions in the monotheistic and polytheistic traditions.

The early traditions of the Jews, are reflected in the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh), which includes the Torah, the first five books. Christians refer to the Tanakh as the Old Testament. Jewish scholars continued to write religious texts such as the Mishnah and the Commentaries. One of the principal roots of Western civilization can be found in the enduring contributions of the ancient Israelites to moral and ethical thought and literature. Teachers may introduce students to biblical literature as a part of the literary heritage and ethical teachings of Western civilization. These traditions may be seen, for example, in teachings about Abraham, Moses, the Exodus, the Ten Commandments, Naomi, Ruth, and David. The main teachings of Judaism include the belief in one God, love your neighbor, weekly day of rest, observance of law, practice of righteousness and justice, and commitment to study.

The Hebrew Bible contains narratives based upon the political history of ancient Israel. It tells of the early Israelite Exodus from Egypt, an event of great significance to Jewish law and belief, especially the concept of a special relationship or covenant between the Israelites and God. After the Exodus, Saul, David, and Solomon—three successive kings who probably lived in the eleventh

and tenth centuries BCE—united the land of Israel. After Solomon’s reign, the unified kingdom split into two: Israel in the north and Judah (from which we get the words Judaism and Jews) in the south.

Teachers set the history of the Israelite states in the broader regional context of western Asia, especially the rise and domination, between the tenth and sixth centuries BCE, of Assyria and Babylonia. Those states successively absorbed all of Mesopotamia, some of Anatolia, and the Levant, including the two Jewish states, into their huge empires. The Babylonians deported many Jews to Mesopotamia, but in 539 BCE, Cyrus the Great, emperor of the new state of Persia, allowed the exiled Jews to return home. In later times, Jews lived under both Greek and Roman rulers. In 70 CE, the Roman army destroyed the Jews’ temple in Jerusalem. Subsequently, many Jews left the region, dispersing to lands throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe. They carried with them the beliefs, traditions, and laws that served them in constituting new social and economic communities in many lands. Jewish sages, such as Yohanan ben Zaccai who lived in the first century CE, did much to preserve and develop religious and legal principles.

Ancient Greece

In this unit students learn about the ancient Greek world, which was centered on the Aegean Sea, including both the Greek peninsula and the west coast of Anatolia (modern Turkey). An elongated coastline and numerous islands stimulated seaborne trade, as well as easy communication between one

community and another. The peninsula's interior of mountains and deep valleys, by contrast, encouraged the independence of small communities and states.

The ancient Aegean world comes into sharper focus in the second millennium BCE. On the island Crete, the Minoans created a robust civilization **due in part to their geographic position as a crossroad of the Mediterranean**, and on the Greek peninsula the Mycenaean's, whose distant ancestors may have come from Central Asia, built numerous palaces and walled cities. Students may read selections from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the two Greek epic poems of Homer, regarded as foundational works of Western literature. These texts, plus archaeological evidence, shed light on the Mycenaean world of fearless warriors who valued public competition and individual glory.

The eastern Mediterranean region experienced a long period of tumult and insecurity between about 1100 and 800 BCE in connection with the aggressive migrations of Sea People. In the eighth century, however, Greek-speaking populations achieved major expansion. They developed more productive agriculture, traded olive oil and wine to distant ports, and founded colonies around the Black Sea and in Sicily and southern Italy. Students learn that these developments contributed to an increasing sense of shared Greek identity, as well as interchange of ideas and goods with Egyptians, Phoenicians, and other neighboring peoples.

After 800 BCE, the city-state, or *polis*, emerged. Central government authority, control of surrounding farmland, and the concept of citizenship characterized this form of civic organization. In most city-states, the earliest

rulers were wealthy aristocrats, but they were eventually replaced by tyrants, or personal dictators, and later by oligarchies, that is, small groups of privileged males. A major exception to this pattern was Athens, where a series of reforms in the sixth century broadened the base of civic participation and paved the way for democracy in the following century.

Teachers may help students understand Greek history by situating it in the broader context of western Asia. In the mid-sixth century BCE, the Persians, a people whose state was centered in present-day Iran, conquered Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, and Anatolia. The rulers of the Persian Achaemenid Empire represented themselves as agents of Ahuramazda, the supreme god in the regionally important religion of Zoroastrianism. Students may compare the types of government represented by the polis and by large empires such as the Achaemenid. The Persians subjugated the Greek city-states of western Anatolia, but they failed in three attempts to invade the Greek peninsula and defeat the Greeks, including those in the cities of Athens and Sparta, the most powerful city-states. Teachers may ask students to read selections from Herodotus (ca 484-425 BCE), the Greek scholar who wrote a vivid narrative of these events in *The Persian Wars*.

In political and cultural terms, Athens in the fifth century BCE was a highly innovative city. Students may compare its system of direct democracy with modern representative democracy. In Athens, every adult male citizen could vote on legislation, and citizens were chosen for key offices by lot. These principles ensured that decision-making lay mostly in the hands of average citizens.

Students may analyze the advantages and limits of this system. For example, women, foreigners, and slaves were excluded from all political participation. The cultural achievements of Athens were numerous. The city produced several philosophers (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle), historians (Herodotus, Thucydides), and orators (Demosthenes, Pericles). It also nurtured drama, both tragedy (Sophocles, Euripides) and comedy (Aristophanes). The Greek art and architecture of the era emphasized naturalistic representations of human forms and buildings of beautiful proportions. The rich tales of Greek mythology influenced all forms of literature and art. Students may consider examples of ways in which Greek culture has had an enduring influence on modern society.

Fighting between Greek city-states was chronic. The Peloponnesian War (431-404 BCE) involved a direct confrontation between Athens and Sparta. Students may assess the contrasting **economic and** political styles of these two city-states. **Because their natural resources (infertile soil and rough terrain) neither city-state was able to produce enough food to feed their growing populations.** In contrast to democratic Athens **which relied on trade to get the food it needed**, Sparta was nearly the equivalent of a permanent army base **because it relied on slaves in conquered territory to produce its food. ~~its~~ As a result, Sparta's** male citizens **were** obligated to full-time military training and rigorous discipline. Athens at that time ruled large areas of the Aegean basin, but Sparta's victory in the war brought the Athenian empire to an end.

Prolonged conflict among the city-states contributed to the military success of Philip II and his son Alexander (ruled 336-323), rulers of Macedonia, a

mountainous kingdom north of Greece. After subduing the peninsula, Alexander led a campaign of unprecedented scope, conquering the Persian Empire, Egypt, and even northwestern India. Following his death, his generals and their sons carved his short-lived empire into separate states. The following two centuries are known as the Hellenistic period. “Hellenistic” refers to the influence of Greek cultural forms in regions far beyond the Aegean, though in fact a lively interchange of products and ideas took place in the broad region from the Mediterranean to India. Athenian democracy did not survive, but Greek ideas, such as language, sculpture, and city planning, mingled creatively with the cultural styles of Egypt, Persia, and India. The Hellenistic era also brought innovations in science and mathematics, for example, the principles of geometry came from Euclid, who lived in the Hellenistic Egyptian city of Alexandria. Teachers may encourage students to assess why Greek ideas and art had such wide appeal. Eventually, the Hellenistic kingdoms west of Persia succumbed to the greater military power of Rome, which in turn absorbed many aspects of Greek culture.

The Early Civilizations of India

In this unit students learn about ancient societies in India. The earliest urban civilization, known as Harappan civilization after one of its cities, was centered in the Indus River valley, though its cultural style spread widely from present-day Afghanistan to west central India. Teachers may guide students in setting this region in comparative perspective with Mesopotamia and Egypt. The Indus River

and its tributaries flow from the Himalaya mountains. It then travels southward across the plain called the Punjab and finally fans out to form the alluvial delta of Sind before emptying into the Arabian Sea. The spring flow of the Indus was fairly predictable, but excessive summer floods could still drown whole cities. On the other hand, the valley soil was not only rich but extended over about 250,000 square miles, twice the arable land area of Mesopotamia or the Nile Valley.

In the Indus River region, dense farming populations and urban centers developed a few centuries later than in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Harappan civilization attained its zenith between about 2600 and 1900 BCE. Teachers may inform students that no one knew of the existence of this urban society until the 1920s, when archaeological work started. Digs have revealed that several Indus cities, including Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, had streets laid out in grids, large brick platforms, well-engineered sewers, and a written script (which has not been deciphered). Archaeologists have also turned up evidence of active commercial exchange between the Indus River region and Mesopotamia by way of the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf.

Harappan civilization steadily declined after 1900 BCE, perhaps owing to ecological factors such as salt buildup in the soil and persistent drought. Indian history then entered the Vedic period (ca. 1500-500 BCE), an era named for the Vedas, a group of political and religious texts written in Sanskrit. In this period, a group known historically as Indo-Aryans (also Aryans) came to control much of India. Most scholars argue on the basis of linguistic and archaeological evidence that people speaking languages in the large Indo-European family entered India

from Central Eurasia in the second millennium BCE; others have argued against this view. The languages of the Aryans were ancestral to such modern South Asian tongues as Hindi. These newcomers were most likely animal herders at first. They may have arrived in India in scattered bands, later intermarrying with the older populations. Students consider how the diffusion and distribution of languages illuminates human migrations in the distant past.

In the Vedic period, new commercial towns arose along the Ganges, India's second great river system. In this era, Brahmanism emerged as a belief system that combined Indo-Aryan beliefs with those of older populations. Brahmins, that is, priestly families who claimed Indo-Aryan ancestry, assumed authority over complex devotional rituals. The brahmin class expounded the idea of the oneness of all living things and of Brahman as the divine principle of being. Indians also venerated thousands of deities, for example, Vishnu, preserver of the world, and Shiva, creator and destroyer of the world. These gods could be seen as aspects of Brahman. Brahmanism gradually built up a rich body of spiritual and moral teachings that formed the foundation of Hinduism. Students may read excerpts from texts that set forth these ideas, including the Upanishads and, later, the Bhagavad Gita. Students also learn about some of this belief system's core concepts, notably karma, reincarnation, and dharma (personal duty).

As in all early civilizations, Indian society witnessed the development of a system of social classes. The main social categories, known as varnas, were priests; warriors; farmers, artisans, and merchants; dependent laborers; and, by

500 CE or earlier, dalits, or "untouchables." This class system became distinctive over the centuries for being especially complex and formal, involving numerous prohibitions that kept groups ritually separated from one another. Because these divisions became particularly rigid, scholars have classified the hierarchy as a caste system. **Because it determined people's occupations and economic relationships the caste system allocated resources, controlled markets and distributed wealth in a way different than the more entrepreneurial system in Babylon and Persia.**

Buddhism emerged in the sixth century BCE in the life and moral teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, or the Buddha. Through the story of his life, his Hindu background, and his search for enlightenment, students may learn about Buddhism's fundamental ideas: unselfishness; compassion for suffering; tolerance; and the prohibition of killing, lying, stealing, and gossiping. The influence of Buddhism in India waned in the later first millennium CE as the Hindu tradition experienced a resurgence. Buddhist monks, nuns, and merchants, however, carried their religion to Sri Lanka (Ceylon), Central Asia, China, and Southeast Asia. In India, Jainism, a religion that encouraged the idea of *ahimsa*, or nonviolence, paralleled the rise of Buddhism. It has continued to play a role in modern India, notably in Mohandas Gandhi's ideas of nonviolent disobedience.

In the late fourth century BCE India moved toward unification owing to the conquests of the warlord Chandragupta Maurya. Teachers may note that the Maurya dynasty (321-184 BCE) was contemporary with the Hellenistic kingdoms

to the west and had diplomatic and commercial relations with them. The Maurya empire reached its peak under the rule of Ashoka (268-232), who unified nearly all of India. Unlike most other ancient rulers, he aimed to govern on the basis of moral and ethical principles. Grounding his approach in the teachings of Buddhism, he instructed his subjects to commit themselves to nonviolence, family harmony, and tolerance.

The Maurya empire broke up in the early second century BCE, but the monarchs of the Gupta state reunified much of the subcontinent in the fourth century CE. The Gupta dynasty (280-550 CE) presided over a rich period of scientific development, including development of a base-ten numerical system that incorporated positional notation and the concept of zero. Students should also learn about other enduring contributions of ancient Indian civilization, including agriculture (cotton and cane sugar), architecture, metallurgy, collections of parables, and games (chess).

The Early Civilizations of China

In this unit students learn the roots of early Chinese civilization, which germinated in the Huang-He (Yellow) River valley with the Shang dynasty (ca.1750-1040 BCE). It later spread south to incorporate the territory around the Yangzi River. The Huang He could be a capricious river, exposing populations to catastrophic floods. On the other hand, farmers supported dense populations and early cities by cultivating the valley's loess, that is, the light, fertile soil that yielded bountiful grain crops. Shang society made key advances in bronze-

working and written language. By considering the evidence of the Shang, students learn that some of the knowledge comes from “oracle bones,” that is, records of divination inscribed on animal bones.

The Zhou dynasty (1122-256 BCE), the longest lasting in China’s history, grew much larger than the Shang by subjecting local princes and chiefs of outlying territories to imperial authority. By the eighth century BCE, however, many of these subordinate officers built up their own power bases, partly by perfecting iron technology to make armaments. The Zhou gradually weakened, plunging China into a long period of political instability and dislocation, especially during the Warring States Period, which lasted nearly two centuries. In those times of trouble, the scholar Confucius (551-479 BCE) lived and wrote. He tried to make sense of the disrupted world he saw, and he proposed ways for individuals and society to achieve order and goodness. In Confucian teachings, which were elaborated by other scholars in later centuries, good people practice moderation in conduct and emotion, keep their promises, honor traditional ways, respect elders, and improve themselves through education. Confucianism promoted the dignity and authenticity of humanity. He also, however, instructed women to play entirely subordinate roles to husbands, fathers, and brothers, though some educated Chinese women produced Confucian literary works. By examining selections from the Analects, or “sayings” of Confucius, students learn that, as with Socrates and Jesus, his ideas were written down by others at a later time. Lao-tzu, another Chinese sage who, according to Chinese tradition, lived around the same time as Confucius, developed an alternative set of teachings,

known as Daoism. It emphasized simple living, shunning of ambition, harmony with nature, and the possibility of a blissful afterlife.

China's long era of division ended when Shi Huangdi (221-210 BCE), a state-builder of great energy, unified China from the Yellow River to the Yangzi River. In less than a dozen years, he laid the foundations of China's powerful imperial bureaucracy. He imposed peace and regularized laws. He also severely punished anyone who defied him, including Confucian scholars, and he uprooted tens of thousands of peasant men and women to build roads, dykes, palaces, the first major phase of the Great Wall, and an enormous tomb for himself. Teachers may introduce students to the excavations of this immense mausoleum, which have yielded a veritable army of life-sized terra cotta soldiers and horses. Shi Huangdi is also well known for employing scholars to standardize and simplify the Chinese writing system, which provided the empire with a more uniform system of communication. Students may analyze how the Chinese logographic script differs from the alphabetic systems that developed in other parts of the world.

Shi Huangdi prefigured the longer-lasting Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE), which unified even more territory and placed central government in the hands of highly educated bureaucrats. Immersed in Confucian teachings, these scholar-officials promoted the idea that peace in society requires people to think and do the right thing as mapped out by tradition. Harmony in the family was seen by Confucians as the key to harmony in the world, especially filial piety, the respect of children for their parents. Ethical principles should uplift the state. Rulers

should govern righteously because when they do they enjoy the trust of their subjects. The benevolent ruler demonstrates that he possesses divine approval, or the “mandate of heaven,” an idea that first emerged in Zhou dynasty times. But if the monarch is despotic, he risks losing that mandate, bringing misfortune on his people and justifiable rebellion. Students may query why this idea might have provided a basis for stable government. In the first century CE, Han officials governed about 60 million people, the great majority of them productive farmers. Major technological advances of the era include new iron farm tools, the collar harness, the wheelbarrow, silk manufacturing, and the cast-iron plow, which cultivators used to open extensive new rice-growing lands in southern China. Students identify the locations of new towns and cities that appeared during the Han era.

Han emperors extended the reach of the empire far to the north and west, facilitating caravan business on the “silk roads” that extended westward across Central Asia, ultimately reaching as far as Rome. In addition to silk, commodities such as dates, copper, herbs, and ceramics were profitably traded along the “silk roads.” Map study shows students that even though the Himalayas impeded direct travel between China and India, routes across the inner Eurasian steppes channeled luxury trade that linked East Asia with India, Persia, Rome, and East Africa. Maritime commerce along the chain of seas that ran from the East China Sea to the Red Sea also developed rapidly in that era. In addition to trade, the silk routes were a conduit for Buddhism, which became an important factor in Chinese religious life, especially in the climate of insecurity that followed the fall

of the Han empire. From then forward, Buddhist belief and practice evolved in the context of Chinese society, custom, and art. For example, Buddhist and Daoist ideas mingled in the arenas of ritual and moral behavior. Han power declined in the second century CE, as regional warlords increasingly broke away from centralized authority, leading to some 400 years of Chinese disunity.

The Development of Rome

In this unit students will learn about the ancient Romans. Students will note that Rome is located on the central west coast of the Italian peninsula. Although Rome's empire was initially on the edge of the prosperous eastern Mediterranean sphere dominated by Greeks, Egyptians, and peoples of the Levant, it eventually encompassed the entire Mediterranean basin and much of its hinterland, especially in Europe.

Students may consult the Roman tradition, recorded in Vergil's *Aeneid* and the works of the historian Livy, that Romulus, a descendant of the Trojan Aeneas, founded the city in 753 BCE. According to these sources, Romulus killed his twin brother Remus during the founding of the city and created both the Roman legions and the senate. The Romans believed that kings first ruled the city and that a republic replaced the monarchy in 509 BCE. They idealized the virtue of public service, as depicted in the story of Cincinnatus, who according to Roman sources was living on a farm when he was chosen to serve as dictator during a hostile invasion in 458 BCE. Cincinnatus gave up his power after the

defeat of the enemy, an action that inspired later leaders such as George Washington.

During the Early Republic (509-264 BCE), the Roman political community was nearly destroyed by social and political conflict between the patricians, a hereditary elite, and the plebeians, who accounted for everyone else. A more stable balance of power finally prevailed, the plebeians gaining legal protections against patrician power and access to high political offices. The Early Republic also witnessed the conquest of the Italian peninsula, whose fertile valleys and coastal plains produced bountiful harvests of wheat, wine, olive oil, and wool. Rome defeated its nearby neighbors in a series of wars and partially incorporated them into the young state, which ensured a steady supply of soldiers for the growing army.

Roman society consisted of two classes: the upper class and the lower class. The upper class consisted of the senatorial class (senatores) and the equestrian class (equites). The lower class consisted of commons (plebs or vulgus), Latins (Latini), foreigners (peregrini), freed people (liberti or libertini) and slaves (servi). Belonging to the upper class had many significant consequences for Romans besides prestige, for social class determined one's economic and political opportunities, as well as legal rights, benefits and penalties. Rome had nothing comparable to our middle class; the gulf between these two upper classes and the much larger lower classes was immense.

Expansion around the Mediterranean rim began in the third century BCE, when Rome defeated the maritime state of Carthage in the Punic Wars. By

devastating Carthage, Rome gained thousands of square miles of wheat land in Sicily and North Africa, as well as a windfall of Spanish silver. In the decades before and after the turn of the millennium, Rome also conquered the Hellenistic kingdoms of Greece and Egypt.

As a result of this expansion, which came to encompass the entire Mediterranean basin, massive wealth from trade and spoils, as well as large numbers of slaves, poured into Italy. This increased the divide between wealthy and poor and put great strain on the Roman political system. Rome's constitution distributed power between elected officials, the citizen body, and the oligarchic senate, but students will discover that in practice decision-making lay with the senate, especially with its most influential members. By the Late Republic (133-31 BCE), political competition between senators became intense and increasingly violent. A succession of ambitious generals used the loyal armies to challenge each other and, increasingly, the authority of the entire senate, which the statesman and author Cicero symbolized. This discord culminated in the dictatorship of Julius Caesar and, under his successor Augustus (31 BCE-14 CE), in the establishment of what was in essence a monarchy and a new ruling dynasty. About the time that the Augustan regime replaced the Republic, large-scale imperial expansion came to a halt and administration of the empire became more systematic. For much of the first three centuries CE, the Roman Empire enjoyed political and territorial stability, and the provinces benefited from new roads, a standardized currency, economic growth, and peaceful conditions.

According to the New Testament, Jesus, a Jewish carpenter from the small Judean city of Nazareth, began to preach a message of peace and divine salvation through love. He taught that God loved all his creation, regardless of status or circumstance, and that humans should reflect that love in relations with one another. Jesus proclaimed one God, a feature that distinguished both Judaism and Christianity from the polytheistic religions of the Greeks and Romans. The Roman authorities in Judea executed Jesus. But under the leadership of his early followers, notably Paul, a Jewish scholar from Anatolia, Christians took advantage of Roman roads and sea lanes to travel widely, preaching to both Jews and others. Between the first and fourth centuries, Christian communities multiplied around the Mediterranean and as far east as Persia. Through selections from the New Testament Bible, students may explore the principal sources we have of the life of Jesus and the career of Paul as missionary and church organizer.

The Romans granted cities in the empire a high degree of local self-government, including in religious affairs. Religious tolerance, however, did not always extend to Jews or Christians. The Roman authorities regarded Jewish rebellions against the empire as a threat to its integrity. The refusal of the Christians to participate in Roman civic rituals led to charges of disloyalty to the empire. Students learn that both groups suffered from Roman repression. Many Jews were dispersed from their homeland in Judea, obliging them to build new communities far and wide. Christians underwent a series of increasingly systematic persecutions. In the fourth century CE, however, Christianity gained

acceptance under the rule of Constantine and later status as Rome's state religion.

Roman culture absorbed much of the Greek and Hellenistic traditions.

Students may use texts and visual sources to compare Roman contributions in art, architecture, engineering, political thought, religion, and philosophy with those of the earlier Greeks. They will discover that Rome's own innovations included advances in architectural design, technologically sophisticated road building, and a body of laws that has had immense influence on legal systems in Europe, the United States, and other parts of the world. Students may also consider ways in which modern writers, artists, and political leaders have appropriated Greek and Roman ideals, values, and cultural forms as worthy models for civil society. Since the grade six curriculum includes numerous descriptions of trade among ancient civilizations, teachers can use an exchange simulation to help students experience the gains from trade.

History—Social Science Content Standards

Grade Six

World History and Geography: Ancient Civilizations

6.1 Students describe what is known through archaeological studies of the early physical and cultural development of humankind from the Paleolithic era to the agricultural revolution.

- 709 1. Describe the hunter-gatherer societies, including the development of tools
710 and the use of fire.
- 711 2. Identify the locations of human communities that populated the major
712 regions of the world and describe how humans adapted to a variety of
713 environments.
- 714 3. Discuss the climatic changes and human modifications of the physical
715 environment that gave rise to the domestication of plants and animals and
716 new sources of clothing and shelter.
- 717 4. 6.2 Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and
718 social structures of the early civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and
719 Kush.
- 720 1. Locate and describe the major river systems and discuss the physical
721 settings that supported permanent settlement and early civilizations.
- 722 2. Trace the development of agricultural techniques that permitted the
723 production of economic surplus and the emergence of cities as centers of
724 culture and power.
- 725 3. Understand the relationship between religion and the social and political
726 order in Mesopotamia and Egypt.
- 727 4. Know the significance of Hammurabi's Code.
- 728 5. Discuss the main features of Egyptian art and architecture.
- 729 6. Describe the role of Egyptian trade in the eastern Mediterranean and Nile
730 valley.
- 731 7. Understand the significance of Queen Hatshepsut and Ramses the Great.

8. Identify the location of the Kush civilization and describe its political, commercial, and cultural relations with Egypt.

9. Trace the evolution of language and its written forms.

6.3 Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the Ancient Hebrews.

1. Describe the origins and significance of Judaism as the first monotheistic religion based on the concept of one God who sets down moral laws for humanity.

2. Identify the sources of the ethical teachings and central beliefs of Judaism (the Hebrew Bible, the Commentaries): belief in God, observance of law, practice of the concepts of righteousness and justice, and importance of study; and describe how the ideas of the Hebrew traditions are reflected in the moral and ethical traditions of Western civilization.

3. Explain the significance of Abraham, Moses, Naomi, Ruth, David, and Yohanan ben Zaccai in the development of the Jewish religion.

4. Discuss the locations of the settlements and movements of Hebrew peoples, including the Exodus and their movement to and from Egypt, and outline the significance of the Exodus to the Jewish and other people.

5. Discuss how Judaism survived and developed despite the continuing dispersion of much of the Jewish population from Jerusalem and the rest of Israel after the destruction of the second Temple in A.D. 70.

6.4 Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the early civilizations of Ancient Greece.

- 755 1. Discuss the connections between geography and the development of city-
756 states in the region of the Aegean Sea, including patterns of trade and
757 commerce among Greek city-states and within the wider Mediterranean
758 region.
- 759 2. Trace the transition from tyranny and oligarchy to early democratic forms
760 of government and back to dictatorship in ancient Greece, including the
761 significance of the invention of the idea of citizenship (e.g., from *Pericles'*
762 *Funeral Oration*).
- 763 3. State the key differences between Athenian, or direct, democracy and
764 representative democracy.
- 765 4. Explain the significance of Greek mythology to the everyday life of people
766 in the region and how Greek literature continues to permeate our literature
767 and language today, drawing from Greek mythology and epics, such as
768 Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and from *Aesop's Fables*.
- 769 5. Outline the founding, expansion, and political organization of the Persian
770 Empire.
- 771 6. Compare and contrast life in Athens and Sparta, with emphasis on their
772 roles in the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars.
- 773 7. Trace the rise of Alexander the Great and the spread of Greek culture
774 eastward and into Egypt.
- 775 8. Describe the enduring contributions of important Greek figures in the arts
776 and sciences (e.g., Hypatia, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Euclid,
777 Thucydides).

6.5 Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the early civilizations of India.

1. Locate and describe the major river system and discuss the physical setting that supported the rise of this civilization.
2. Discuss the significance of the Aryan invasions.
3. Explain the major beliefs and practices of Brahmanism in India and how they evolved into early Hinduism.
4. Outline the social structure of the caste system.
5. Know the life and moral teachings of Buddha and how Buddhism spread in India, Ceylon, and Central Asia.
6. Describe the growth of the Maurya empire and the political and moral achievements of the emperor Asoka.
7. Discuss important aesthetic and intellectual traditions (e.g., Sanskrit literature, including the *Bhagavad Gita*; medicine; metallurgy; and mathematics, including Hindu-Arabic numerals and the zero).

6.6 Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the early civilizations of China.

1. Locate and describe the origins of Chinese civilization in the Huang-He Valley during the Shang Dynasty.
2. Explain the geographic features of China that made governance and the spread of ideas and goods difficult and served to isolate the country from the rest of the world.

3. Know about the life of Confucius and the fundamental teachings of Confucianism and Taoism.
4. Identify the political and cultural problems prevalent in the time of Confucius and how he sought to solve them.
5. List the policies and achievements of the emperor Shi Huangdi in unifying northern China under the Qin Dynasty.
6. Detail the political contributions of the Han Dynasty to the development of the imperial bureaucratic state and the expansion of the empire.
7. Cite the significance of the trans-Eurasian "silk roads" in the period of the Han Dynasty and Roman Empire and their locations.
8. Describe the diffusion of Buddhism northward to China during the Han Dynasty.

6.7 Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures during the development of Rome.

1. Identify the location and describe the rise of the Roman Republic, including the importance of such mythical and historical figures as Aeneas, Romulus and Remus, Cincinnatus, Julius Caesar, and Cicero.
2. Describe the government of the Roman Republic and its significance (e.g., written constitution and tripartite government, checks and balances, civic duty).
3. Identify the location of and the political and geographic reasons for the growth of Roman territories and expansion of the empire, including how

- 822 the empire fostered economic growth through the use of currency and
823 trade routes.
- 824 4. Discuss the influence of Julius Caesar and Augustus in Rome's transition
825 from republic to empire.
- 826 5. Trace the migration of Jews around the Mediterranean region and the
827 effects of their conflict with the Romans, including the Romans' restrictions
828 on their right to live in Jerusalem.
- 829 6. Note the origins of Christianity in the Jewish Messianic prophecies, the life
830 and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth as described in the New Testament,
831 and the contribution of St. Paul the Apostle to the definition and spread of
832 Christian beliefs (e.g., belief in the Trinity, resurrection, salvation).
- 833 7. Describe the circumstances that led to the spread of Christianity in Europe
834 and other Roman territories.
- 835 8. Discuss the legacies of Roman art and architecture, technology and
836 science, literature, language, and law.